



REPRESENTATION PERMANENTE DE LA FRANCE
AUPRES DE L'OSCE

Working Session 2: Fundamental Freedoms I

Statement on Media Freedom by France

I fully back the declaration of the European Union. I would specifically like to raise the issue of protection of journalists, which France feels has been insufficiently addressed by the OSCE, despite the numerous commitments made regarding freedom of the media and freedom of expression.

1) The first step towards protecting journalists both on-line and off-line is to establish a legislative framework which promotes freedom of expression and adheres to international law. Following on from this principle is freedom of the press, which is an essential part of freedom of expression.

In this legislative environment, the principle of protecting sources must be fully taken into account and better applied within the OSCE area. In France, it was added to the law on the Freedom of the Press on 5 January 2010, which stipulates that journalists cannot be legally obligated to reveal their sources, meaning that they can remain independent and carry out their work from a completely impartial standpoint. The French legislature is currently examining a new bill aiming to further strengthen this principle of confidentiality of sources.

2) Protecting journalists also means preventing acts of violence, whether they be intimidation, harassment, or physical attacks, as well as prosecuting these acts when they occur.

Following a French-Greek initiative in partnership with Reporters Without Borders, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1738 (2006) on the protection of journalists in armed conflict.

But it would be incorrect to say that the commitments of participating States for the protection of journalists are limited to armed conflict. International commitments regarding the protection of freedom of expression and freedom of the press apply regardless of the context. It was in this spirit that on 26 November 2013 the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on the "safety of journalists and the issue of impunity", which calls on States to prevent violence against journalists, to respect their independence and to fight against the impunity of perpetrators. As was highlighted by our Foreign Affairs Minister, Laurent Fabius: "A crime against journalists is a double crime: it's a crime against people, but it is also a crime against the freedom to inform and to be informed." These crimes must not go unpunished, including in the OSCE area. As a recommendation, we would like to call on all participating states to ensure that the OSCE meets the standards of the UN in terms of protection of journalists.